



METROPOLITAN
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION

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Memorandum

TO: Partnership Board

DATE: February 15, 2008

FR: Teresa Galvin Lee

W. I.

RE: 2007 Spare the Air/Free Transit Campaign Evaluation & Recommendations for 2008

MTC and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (Air District) partnered with 29 Bay Area transit operators to implement the 2007 Spare the Air/Free Transit Campaign (2007 Campaign). Free rides were offered on the first four, non-holiday Spare the Air weekdays of the summertime ozone season (June 1 through October 12). Transit was free all day on Bay Area buses and light-rail. On BART, Caltrain, the ACE train and the Golden Gate, Vallejo and Alameda ferries, transit was free until 1:00 p.m. The goals of the 2007 Campaign were to raise public awareness about the linkages between air quality and travel choices and to encourage the public to adjust their travel behavior by reducing driving, taking transit, trip linking, eliminating a trip, carpooling, walking and/or biking. Other goals of the 2007 Campaign were to prevent excesses of the national 8-hour ozone standard and to encourage longer-term behavioral changes that benefit air quality.

The total budget for the 2007 Campaign for four free transit days was \$8.5 million using a combination of Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement funds (88.5%) and Transportation Fund for Clean Air (TFCA) funds (11.5%). Although funding was allotted for four free transit days, only two Spare the Air days were issued by the Air District on August 29 and 30, 2008.

Program Results

MTC, in consultation with the Air District, prepared a program evaluation of the 2007 Campaign. Key elements addressed in the evaluation include determining the number of additional riders carried on the two Spare the Air days, measuring changes in driving behavior, assessing overall public awareness and recall of Spare the Air messaging and estimating the emission reductions produced by the program. The full program evaluation is attached for your review, and a few key highlights are outlined below:

- Transit ridership levels rose by 22 percent regionwide over the two Spare the Air/Free Transit days, adding a total of 665,004 riders to the system over established baselines. This equates to an average of 332,502 additional riders per Spare the Air day.
- Nearly 10 percent of Bay Area drivers reduced at least one trip in response to the 2007 Campaign.

- Eighty percent of Bay Area residents knew about the Spare the Air campaign and correctly identified its purpose. Of these, 82 percent held a favorable opinion of the Spare the Air campaign.
- An estimated 4.4 tons of nitrogen oxides (NO_x), 4.6 tons of reactive organic gases (ROG), 4.5 tons of particulate matter (PM-10) per Spare the Air day were reduced due to changes in driving behavior, taking transit and reduced use of consumer products that pollute. Emission reductions of these pollutants totaled 13.45 tons.
- The cost-effectiveness of the 2007 Campaign is \$342,007 per ton of total emissions reduced based on our estimate of 13.45 tons of NO_x, ROG and PM-10 emissions reduced over the two Spare the Air days.
- There were no excesses of the national 8-hour ozone standard on either of the two Spare the Air days of August 29 and 30.

Staff Recommendations for a 2008 Campaign

CMAQ funding for the Spare the Air/Free Transit Campaign was set to expire in 2007. However, because funding was allocated for four free transit Spare the Air weekdays in 2007, and only two Spare the Air advisories were issued, there is a remaining balance of approximately \$4 million in CMAQ and TFCA funding. Discussions with the Air District are underway regarding the most effective use of the remaining funds for a 2008 Campaign. For 2008, the idea of broadening the messaging of Spare the Air to include climate change is also under discussion. Staff will discuss these and other possible Spare the Air options at your meeting.